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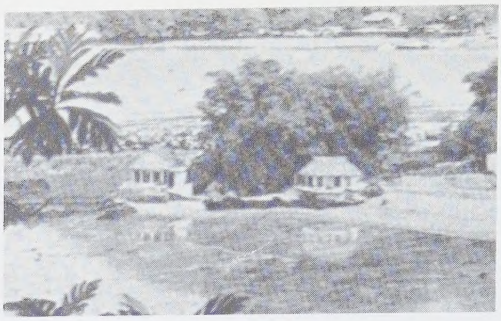

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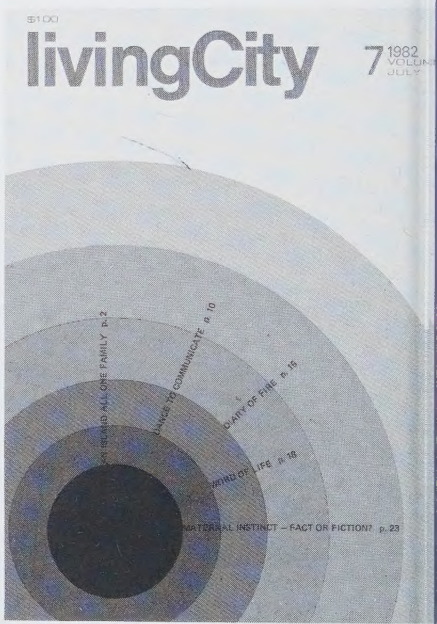

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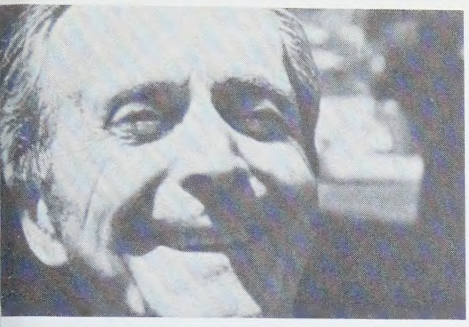

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AN ISLAND ALL ONE FAMILY

Rita Muccio, director of the women's branch of the Focolare Movement in Australasia, tells of the first Mariapolis in Polynesia which took place on Futuna, one of the tiny isles in the South Pacific.

For the past fifteen years I have lived in Australia, but of the many isles which dot the Pacific — of their cultures and peoples, I knew very little. It was not until 1975 when I met an Italian missionary Sister coming from the island of Futuna, that I discovered the rich world of Polynesia. Sister Anna and one of her students had flown more than 1,300 miles to attend the Mariapolis[1] being held in Australia.

It gave all of us a tremendous joy to welcome someone coming from so far away. We made friends with Sister Anna and with Telesia, her young companion; and it was from them, and from the Marist missionaries of the islands of Wallis and Futuna, that we received an invitation to come to Polynesia, and to help them prepare a Mariapolis there too. This was how I found myself on the way to these two islands situated far out in the Pacific Ocean.

Stopping over on New Caledonia, I first met Polynesia: the vegetation of the island reminded me of Australia; there were many eucalyptuses, and here and there palm trees jutted up high. The buildings in the city were modern; only in the little villages did we find the dwellings indigenous to the island.

Telesia, who was returning home, and I were warmly welcomed and I realized, to my surprise, that the spirit of the Focolare Movement had already

(Continued on page 5)

THE MARTYRDOM OF PIERRE CHANEL

The story of Father Pierre Chanel begins in 1836 when, with a handful of other French missionaries belonging to the newly approved Society of Mary, he set sail on a tiny brig for the islands of the South Pacific.

Only a few years before, the Vatican Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples had established the vicariate of South Oceania, which was then entrusted to the young religious family made up of only twenty members.

Pierre Chanel landed on the island of Futuna on November 8, 1837, having left LeHavre on the vigil of Christmas almost a year before. The head of the Mission, Bishop Pompallier, had obtained permission from king Niuliki to leave Father Chanel and Brother Marie Nizier on the island. They would live in the king's hut until they had built one for themselves.

A period of intense hardship began for the two young missionaries. The weather was hot and humid. There were torrential rains. The food which the king provided was scarce and according to his whims. They did not know the language and there was no dictionary or grammar text. They had to learn it word by word, pointing to each object, and writing down phonetically the sounds which the natives would utter. In addition, the work of evangelization was slow under such conditions. Every once in a while, the missionaries would have the consolation of baptizing the dying — more often than not, children.

In the meantime, king Niuliki's benevolence was fast diminishing: he grew more and more fearful of losing prestige in the eyes of his subjects who considered him to be the oracle of the gods. His malice turned to open hostility when several young boys, attracted by Father Chanel's serenity, began visiting his hut, to be instructed in the Christian religion. The king's displeasure reached a climax when his own son, Meitala, joined them.

Niuliki, with several other leaders, after having tried in vain to discourage the young catechumens with threats, began to persecute the missionaries. Their things were continually stolen; at all times one of them had to remain at home in order to avoid having everything disappear. Also the little food which they had managed to raise from the small plantation of bananas would be taken almost from their very hands, since even while they were eating the natives entered the hut and demanded the food.

Above: A portrait of the saint.
Left: An expressive drawing done by the natives, tells the story of the martyrdom of St. Pierre Chanel.

During this period, one evening while they were praying together, Brother Nizier heard Father Chanel say, "Lord, if I am the obstacle to the conversion of souls..."

In the meantime, the tribal leaders met with the king. Worried about what would happen should the young people - the future of the island - resolve to become Christians, they decided that it "was better that only one should die"; thus was decreed the death of the missionary. One of the leaders, Musumusu, volunteered to kill the priest.

One day, while Brother Nizier was on the other part of the island

assisting a sick person, several men arrived at the hut. They found Father Chanel in the garden and, asking him for the stick he held in his hand, he gave it to them, suspecting nothing. A young boy then asked for a piece of cloth for Musumusu whom he said was wounded. Father Chanel went into the hut to find it. The natives followed him in and began to carry off everything they could find. When Father Chanel protested, Musumusu shouted, "Go ahead! What are you waiting for? Kill him!" One of the natives lifted the club and beat the missionary repeatedly. Father Chanel fell to the ground, against the wall of the hut.

At that moment, some of his students arrived and the missionary told them to call Maligi, the king's adviser who had always been kind to him. But Maligi was away on Alofi, another island not far from Futuna. It was then that Father Chanel understood he was to die. The boys heard him murmer: "Death is a gift for me. I am happy to die for them..." Musumusu, furious that the missionary was still alive, grabbed a hatchet and split open Father Chanel's head. He was left bleeding on the ground to die alone, killed by those he had tried to help. It was only three years after his arrival to the island, with no apparent fruit from his tireless and zealous work.

Several days later - it is said on the island - there was an eclipse of the sun. The terrified natives read it as a sign of the gods' anger for their crime. A few months later, Niuliki died, followed by some of his advisers who had also taken part in the plot to kill the missionary.

In less than a year the entire island had become Christian. The grain of wheat fallen to the ground had died and produced much fruit.

Sister Anna and Telesia, during the Mariapolis in Australia.

(Continued from page 3)

reached Noumea, via France — that there, some were already trying to live its spirituality of unity.

From Noumea, another airplane flew us to Wallis, the largest of the French islands, located on the international date line about thirteen degrees south of the Equator. It would actually be, so to speak, on the other side of the date line if it did not change its course to circle these islands. Having come originally from Italy, for me this was the furthest ends of the earth. A phrase from a Psalm rose spontaneously to mind; it was a prayer that the first focolarine[2] had made at the very beginning of the Movement on the feast of Christ the King: "Ask of me and I will give you the nations for an inheritance and the ends of the earth for your possession" (Ps.2:8).

Several days later, a tiny eight-seat airplane — almost a flying taxi — our luggage propped behind the seats, carried us to Futuna, 120 miles away.

Our destination was Futuna because there, the spirit of the Movement had spread through Sister Anna. Many times during my two week visit I asked myself who or what had prompted me to undertake such a long trip — to go and find a small group of persons about whom I knew very little. Something inside had strongly urged me to go, and had brought me all the way there. God must have had some plan.

We received a very warm welcome.I stayed with the Marist sisters and not only they, but everyone on the island made me feel at home. Telesia had stayed with us in Australia for several months. She belonged to our family, consequently they felt that I belonged to hers. Her mother and family offered me a straw mat and sheets to sleep on, the traditional clothing of the island to wear and more than enough food. Father Bernard, the Marist priest originally from Wallis who is responsible for the Mission there, and Sister Anna, accompanied me everywhere, showing me the island.

Futuna is situated on a coral reef. From the air, we could see its oval shape edged in the emerald green that shone up from the depths of the sea. Wooded hills run lengthwise along the island. The houses are made of straw stretched tightly across posts, their cone-shaped roofs dot the sandy beach. Encircling the shore are tall coconut palms and banana trees.

My first days there, I was amazed to see the women strolling back and forth in the sea, as though in search of something. I was told that this was their way of fishing with tiny nets. Almost every day we tasted the most delicious freshly caught fish, as well as huge lobsters and crabs.

During the various brief trips we made in the Mission truck, Father Bernard would recount the customs of the island, there where money hardly even existed, because it wasn't really necessary. In fact, there was only one store in Futuna. Besides the fish which could be found ready at hand in the low tides around the island,

Previous pages and left: The rich natural resources of the island of Futuna render the population almost completely self-sufficient. The forest furnishes food and wood, the sea provides abundant fish.
Right: Rita Muccio (center back) with some friends from the island, outside the shrine at Poi, site of the martyrdom of St. Pierre Chanel.

the vegetation offered fruit in abundance. Here and there we could see small plots of taros and ingham, a type of potato used in place of bread. These plots, Father Bernard explained, were public property.

Many times the leaders and representatives of the village of Alo invited me to share with them the traditional drink called "kava." With a special ritual it would be prepared before us, with leaves and roots being pressed in a wooden bowl. Although it had a slightly bitter taste, it was good, and since during the conversation it would be passed often, Telesia, who was standing next to me, suggested that I only dip my lips into the drink and pour the rest on the ground, if I didn't want to feel its heady effects.

One day, Bishop Lolesio Fuahea, also originally from Wallis, came with Father Bernard and together we went to the shrine of St. Pierre Chanel in Poi. The street that runs along the edge of the island was still under construction and, at a certain point, due to a torrential downpour, the little truck we were driving got mired down. When we got out, we too sank — into ankle-deep mud. It was there that Telesia's mother, Malakalita, reached us, making her way through on a little motorbike! She had brought us coconuts which, in that dense, tropical heat, we gratefully cracked open to drink the cool milk inside.

The shrine of Poi is situated on the place where St. Pierre Chanel lived and was martyred. It is a hexagon-shaped building of gray stone and all around the tall palm trees sway in the wind sweeping off the ocean. The beach is nearby, and the waves beat continually against the shore, covering it with foam. Not far from the church there is a small, white building to house pilgrims coming to visit the shrine. Here and there, mixed in with various plants, one can see vines growing wild, the same vines, I was told, that Father Chanel planted to have wine for Mass.

The difficulties in preparing for the Mariapolis were not small. There were no telephones and means of transportation could be counted on one finger. The various groups that would be coming were scattered on different parts of the island; they would have to walk many miles in order to meet together. And too, one finds a different sense of time on the island; even if one agreed to meet, perhaps on Tuesday, it did not necessarily mean the following Tuesday.

Moreover, the island traditionally had been divided in two. At the center are the villages of Alo and Singave, inhabited by two tribes which have been fighting for centuries.

At first it seemed that only the girls attending the school in Alo, where Sister Anna taught, would participate in the Mariapolis. But little by little, things began to happen. We heard that the girls of the school in Singave,who had also found out about the event, wanted to take part in the Mariapolis. Then a group of boys asked if they could participate, as did a group of families... In the end, 500 persons came together for three days in the Mariapolis, truly a triumph of Jesus in our midst.[3]

At Fatuloi, further north of the Singave Bay, we were offered the

THE FLOWER STILL TO BLOOM

In the women's focolare[1] in Melbourne, together with young women of various nationalities, there is Malia who comes from the island of Futuna.

She was always proud to be the first born of eight children. Ever since she was very little, she is twenty-three now, her parents taught her to love Our Lady. She wanted to be like her, to follow her. But how could she do this? Which way could it be?

On her First Communion Day, her uncle, Father Lolesio, who would become bishop of the two islands of Wallis and Futuna, came to visit her. The little girl asked him what had prompted him to leave everything when he was young and become a priest. He pointed to two splendid flowers on a tree near her house: one was completely opened, the other, still to bloom. He asked her: "Which flower do you think is more beautiful?" Malia pointed to the budding flower. "Why?" he asked her, but she did not know how to answer him. "You see," he told her, "all of its beauty and perfume is still enclosed within, while in the other one, it will soon vanish. If you love someone, you want to give him that which is most beautiful. I wanted to give God my youth, my strength, my life still to bloom so that he could use it for his kingdom." His explanation touched Malia deeply.

She grew up full of energy and joy, and like all young people her age, when not at school, she loved to spend time playing games and dancing. She was one of the best at volleyball, and hoped to participate in the Olympics of the South Pacific.

At home, her parents spoke of matrimony with the eldest son of family friends, but this idea didn't go well with Malia. She wanted to choose for herself the companion for life. It was at this time that a friend invited her to meet Sister Anna, an Italian missionary sister teaching in the school in Alo.

Malia Tafili, now in the focolare in Melbourne, is one of the four focolarine originally from Futuna.

Through Sister Anna she met the gen[2], and she was struck by their songs. Little by little, she was touched by their life and her attitude began to change.

She did not take part in the Olympics as she had hoped; instead she went to the Mariapolis[3] in Fatulon and there, she heard the story of the beginnings of the Focolare.

Although she was not one to sit still long, nor endure talks, she remained spellbound by the story. Even today Malia does not know how to explain what happened that day. She remembers only that she felt as though her soul were bursting, and that she left, unable to hold back her tears.

It was God calling her. This became clearer with the passing of time and two years later, she decided to give her youth, still to bloom, to the One who had created her. She asked him to use her as an instrument of unity for the ideal that had reached her on the tiny, "lost" isle in the midst of the Pacific.

1,2) See inside back cover.
3) Annual gathering of the Focolare Movement.

French Government Tourist Office

use of a new two-floor building, set in the midst of a grassy clearing close to the shore. The rooms on the ground floor became the dormitory for the women, while the chapel which occupied the entire upper floor became the room for meetings. Two long huts used during the day as the dining area, became the men's dormitory at night.

I had been worried about providing food for everyone attending the Mariapolis, but in the end, no extensive preparation was necessary. Before the Mariapolis, several families had given us pigs and baskets of potatoes, which early every morning the men would cook in ovens underground. By noon, this food which had cooked slowly was delicious, and would be distributed to everyone. Each day young people came bringing other gifts: a basket of bread from the only French bakery, potatoes, ingham, perch, fish, vegetables. Three fountains provided water for everyone.

Aside from the colorful costumes and the natural surround-

Above: Fish are plentiful and easily caught in the limpid waters between the coral reefs and the island's coastline.

Right: The folklore most typical of all of Polynesia is dance. The participants at the Mariapolis in Futuna, in the presence of the two kings of the island, performed a dance to express their joy.

A typical drink of the island is prepared by pressing leaves of kava.

Photographs from the book "Wallis & Futuna," by Philippe Godard.

ings typical of the Pacific islands, the atmosphere was the same as that experienced in the Mariapolis which takes place each year all over the world. We realized this the first evening when we met in groups to share the experiences lived together throughout the day. Unity was established among us, in the face of many difficulties. Adults and children raced to help one another — to see who could perform more acts of love, overcoming in one leap traditional barriers of rivalry and hatred which had long divided the island. Everyone began to speak of this newfound unity, expressing the joy of seeing young and old, of both Alo and Singave, treating each other with respect and love. It was as though the island had become "a great family with Jesus in their midst."

This sense of brotherhood grew day-by-day and reached a climax with the arrival of two telegrams — one from the Holy Father, one from Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Movement. With these special greetings, the population of the tiny island felt the love of the Church and of the whole Movement throughout the world.

On the last day, the Mariapolis Fest was held out in the open, on the grassy stretch of land outside the building: everyone took turns presenting songs, dances, and skits. The elders of the villages had prepared a war dance, using a white canoe as a drum; the women performed an amusing dance with brooms; the children presented a play about a French saint. A rhythmical dance had been prepared by the young people. It spoke of joy, and asked us to thank "Calala" (Chiara).

The spectators sat all around in a half circle. While the groups took turns, every once in awhile, someone would go over to place money at the feet of the dancers, or in a box next to the kings of the two villages, Patita and Nasalio, who were present on the last day. The money was then given to me to pay for the cost of the trip. At the end, all renewed the pact of mutual love that they had made during Mass.

On the return trip home several days later, via the tiny airplane that brought me back to Wallis, words of the old Manafa, one of the leaders of the islands came to my mind. He had said at the end of the Mariapolis: "Futuna is now a united people. It wants to become the city 'on the mountaintop,' that gives light not only to the other islands of the Pacific, but to the whole world."

Who knows, I told myself. Certainly this people, not yet touched by the ills of our civilization, is fundamentally good, and 150 years of Christianity have profoundly shaped their customs and habits. The two big parish churches, each able to hold 1,000 persons, and always filled during the Sunday Masses, testified to this. If they remain united as one people of God, "as a great family with Jesus in the midst of them," they truly could be "a city on the mountaintop."

Rita Muccio

1) Annual gathering of the Focolare Movement.
2) See inside back cover.
3) Cf. Mt. 18:20.

DANCE TO COMMUNICATE

by Michele Zanzucchi

Liliana Cosi and Marinel Stefanescu, famous stars of classical dance, have been the main force behind an association for the development of classical ballet begun only a few years ago. Among its many initiatives is a rigorous and original school for the formation of new apprentices to this difficult art.

An ethereal creature of spontaneous grace. This is the image of the ballerina — an image nourished by the magic of dance itself, supported by biographies, enhanced in film. Little is said, however, of the behind-the-scenes training.

I caught a glimpse into this world during a recent visit to the studios of the Association for Classical Ballet (ABC), where its school of classical dance is located in the heart of Italy. From the outside, the ABC building looks less like a ballet school and more like one of the many small office buildings lining the rich river valley of the Po. Inside, the impression persists: white walls, a few wooden benches, a bulletin board crowded with announcements and schedules, a soft-drinks machine off to one side, the classic "No Smoking" sign, a few well-cared for plants in the corner. It could be the entrance to a small company, or even to a school. Of ballet, it bespeaks nothing.

Only upon opening the heavy, soundproof doors of one of the three dance studios do I discover the school, and more precisely, the rigorous training that shapes this art.

One entire wall is covered with mirrors; a barre runs along the other three sides. There is a piano, a chair for the teacher and, of course, the bare wooden floor: Only the essentials, well lit by enormous lights.

In the first and largest room, the third and fourth year students are practicing hard, measuring their steps to the rhythm set by the piano.

The exercises are rigorous, and the students, in blue leotards with white tights, seem more like gymnasts than dancers. Their faces are poised in the direction of the teacher who sternly delivers the directions. The students' movements appear awkward, even clumsy, as they repeat the same exercises over and over, but when they begin to dance, their stiffness melts and the movements became fluid and graceful.

In the next room, the strict training is even more apparent. The seventh and eighth year students are studying under the direction of Marinel Stefanescu. Marinel shouts, almost screams, letting no error slip by, demanding the students' total attention, not only for the correct execution of each step, but also for the appropriate facial expression and gesture of the arms.

Two girls, not in costume, are seated off to one side, temporarily stopped by muscle sprains. They follow the lessons avidly, almost seem-

To the right, Liliana Cosi in a scene from "Doina," an original ballet choreographed by Marinel Stefanescu, and performed for the first time in May 1978.

Liliana Cosi, native of Milan, studied dance at La Scala and graduated in 1957. In 1963 she went to Moscow's Bolshoi Theater for further training, the start of an intense period under the direction of the greatest Russian masters. In 1965 she made her debut at the Bolshoi in "Swan Lake"; in 1966 she interpreted "Giselle"; in 1967,"Sleeping Beauty." In the meantime she had become soloist at La Scala, Prima Ballerina, and in 1970, Etoile.

At La Scala she has danced the most demanding roles in the classical repertoire. Her partners include the most prestigious names in classical ballet. She has danced at the Kremlin, at the Coliseum Theater, London, with Nureyev on European tour, and was guest at the London Festival Ballet. She has worked with Bejart in Brussels and has crossed the Ocean for shows and festivals.

The Cosi-Stefanescu Dance Company began its first tours in 1976, and continues to perform a wide variety of classical and modern ballet.

Marinel Stefanescu. A Rumanian, Stefanescu studied in his native city of Bucharest as well as at the Bolshoi Theater with Messerer and Ermolaeer. In 1966: Premier Danseur at the Hungarian State Opera House, Bucharest. In 1969: winner of the award for best interpretation at the first International Ballet Competition, Moscow.

He began his international career as protagonist in both classical and modern repertoires. His partners have included leading international stars such as Magdalena Poma, Alicia Alonso, Liliana Cosi. Nominated Premier Danseur Etoile at the Opernhaus in Zurich, he has also danced with the London Festival Ballet, as well as with other European companies, and has proven artistic talent in the field of choreography.

ing to repeat with their eyes the same movements of the others.

I meet Liliana Cosi in her office. Behind her is a bronze bas — relief of a swan, symbol of the Association.

Q. Ballet demands a rigorous and sustained commitment. From the lessons which I have watched, it seems to me that the teachers are very strict. How do you succeed in obtaining the support of your students?

A. "The rigorous, total self-discipline of the body which we expect does not come from the body alone; it comes from the mind and spirit which guide it. This fact is essential if one is to persevere in such a strenuous life. We try to convey this to our students through our lessons in dance theory, but especially through the practical application of it in our daily relationships with them.

"We emphasize this because we maintain that technique alone cannot be the ultimate end of dance as, in reality, is so often the case today. Over these last years we have noticed an increasing dearth of Prima Ballerinas, precisely due to this absolute priority given to dance technique. The Prima Ballerina or Premier Danseur is not so much one who dances technically better than

My apprentice dancers

Marinel Stefanescu has answered several questions for us.

Q. Stefanescu, how do you handle the problems that come up with your students?

A. "Ballet is an extremely demanding discipline. It often happens, therefore, that the students lose patience and lack the necessary humility to recognize their mistakes. If they go on like this, however, everything collapses. 'I don't like to dance anymore,' one ends up saying. But this is not true. We explain, gently but clearly, the basic mistake - the lack of humility. Some burst into tears, others react in silence. There are those who accuse us of being too severe. But almost always the love for ballet wins out because its phases, its atmosphere, its joys too enter into one's blood. This aspect of the training does not deal so much with intelligence as with one's capacity to accept criticism. For us teachers, the work is to keep an eye on the student who has the greatest difficulty and to bring that one up to the level of the others. Thus we avoid leaving anyone out."

Q. How can you describe, then, true apprentice dancers?

A. "They are honest; they love. Otherwise they wouldn't remain here, but would go home and do something else. I can't help having respect for those students who never miss a lesson. Once in a while, someone doesn't make it, or they hide their mistakes; this is natural. But these moments disappear with the dancer's resolve to persevere. A dancer is one who loves and wants to love. Not a spark of this love should be lost: rather, it should be fueled to become flame."

Above, an exercise class in the ABC school.

To the right, Liliana Cosi during the interview.
"Dancing," says Liliana Cosi, "is first and foremost sacrifice. Those who seriously wish to take it up must understand right away that it is not a decision to be taken lightly. You have to give everything, all the time. The students have to keep up with their regular school as well as this new one they have chosen. Our task is to contribute towards the full development of the student's personality."

The school also interests itself in maintaining a dialogue with the students' families who play an essential role of the formation of the dancer. Students from other cities are also helped to find adequate lodging.

What is the Classical Ballet Association

The ABC was formed as an independent, self-sufficient ballet company thus able to bring dance to many cities outside the normal run of the arts. Hundreds of shows have been prepared in only a few years all throughout Italy, principally in the South.

ABC enlarged its horizons in 1978, forming a school of classical ballet in Reggio Emilia, in the heart of Italy.

From seventy students enrolled the first year (1977-78), the number has more than doubled with 150 students now in training. The number of girls applying outnumbers that of the boys due to the traditional reluctance of families to encourage their sons in this field. The selection process is rigorous, designed to verify the true predisposition of each student to classical dance.

Besides training in classical ballet, the school offers character and historical dance, as well as lessons in dance theory, costume and makeup. The faculty works in strict collaboration, following the method of the great Russian teacher Agrippina Vaganova - one of the most serious, productive and demanding in classical dance.

others. It is the one who attracts the attention on stage, one who has personality, something to say. We try to help our students grasp this idea, so as to give them also the incentive which is truly necessary for this very strenuous discipline."

Q. You spoke of maintaining a personal relationship with the students. How do you establish this rapport with your students?

A. "We do it by sharing little pieces of advice - for blisters, for example, or on how to cure a strained tendon, or one of the other small troubles that accompany dance. The students write to us, share with us their small or big problems, their aspirations. We answer, we listen.

"The fundamental element to this relationship, however, is example which I feel I must always give, not only when I am in school. For this reason, both Marinel and I train with the older students. This is already something out of the ordinary because it never happens that a Prima Ballerina, that 'etoiles', practice with their students.

"Something which can also happen is to have students missing too many classes because they find themselves in financial difficulties or under too much stress. We try, then, to understand their problem and, if we can, to help out. If it is necessary, as has happened, we visit their homes to resolve difficulties which may come up with their parents."

Q. Considering the influence of mass-media, those who enter the school might have been attracted by the wrong image of the world of dance - with the myth of the ballerina, or with the false notion of dance as simple exhibition of one's body, or particular talents. Is it so?

A. "Certainly. Especially in the beginning, one is drawn to the world of ballet, fascinated by some aspect of its 'myth.' But almost immediately the myth disappears. From the very beginning, we insist on the fact that expression in dance comes from the whole body but especially from the head and arms. And we explain that the arms serve to communicate with the public, to say something as, for example, in pantomine which has given much to ballet. And also, the fact that we demand from our students true expression shows that we do not consider dance to be purely geometric design, but rather, the communication of ideals."

Q. Let us go back a bit to the beginning of the school...

A. "We opened the school four years ago. My collaboration with Marinel had begun just a short time before. We had formed a ballet company and needed somewhere to practice. We found this building. Little by little, following many requests, we decided to open a school, which we now feel is essential in order to carry the artistic message which urges us from within."

Q. At what point is the school now?

A. "We are now completely filled up to the point that we had to move some of the lessons to the morning. There are 150 students, four teachers, three pianists, and several collaborators. These figures do not include the off-schedule intensive or continued training courses which we offer two or three times each year.

"This year we are beginning to collect the first 'fruits' of our work, 'fruits' which might still be a bit green. We have already produced a simple show with some of the eighth year students, and this summer we would like to put on a ballet entitled 'Coppelia,' with some of the students from the last years. This would give them the chance to handle the experience of stage 'butterflies.'

"Future plans include the possibility of enlarging the school, also given the interest shown by the government."

Q. Have you sacrificed some of your own art while directing this school?

A. "I should certainly hope not. If that has happened it has been our own fault. What is true is that we may have sacrificed some of our international fame."

Q. What was it then that prompted you to form this ballet company?

A. "I believe that ballet partners who meet only to perform while on a world tour are not able to truly express themselves, nor give the public that which partners who share the same ideals can give. On our tours with always changing partners, we no longer succeeded in expressing freely that spiritual potential essential to art. I am convinced that art must be meaningful for all humanity; it must enrich the life of those who are not artists. 'Art,' it has been said, 'is to know how to convey that something in the soul which does not die.' An artist must be a loving force in the midst of society - one who is always attentive to maintaining alive this 'highest of harmonies.' We have believed deeply in doing something in this direction. That is why we began ABC from the ground up.

DIARY OF FIRE

Igino Giordani whom Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, described as a "great soul, always open to humanity," and whom Pope John Paul XXIII called a "shining light."

Many of our readers are already familiar with the writings of Igino Giordani. We are happy to present some excerpts from his last work, "*Diary of Fire*" just published by New City Press, New York.

It is an extraordinary record of personal notes and reflections which reveals Giordani's conviction that all are called to a life of perfection, that the Gospel can be lived fully not only by those called to the religious life, but by lay people as well. But this book's most moving contribution in that it records not ideas alone, but ideas which have been tested and tempered in life. In fact, Giordani here gives us his life.

November,1941

Disappointments and sacrifices are neither disappointments nor sacrifices: they are means of re-discovering the... relationship: God and you. Disappointments and sacrifices empty out human material in order that the divine spirit may penetrate into the space left free. Men leave you in order that God may take you back.

January 12, 1956

You can stay on your feet, even if everyone abandons you: it is enough to lean on the Cross.

The Cross keeps you on your feet; and leaning against it you find yourself suddenly side by side with so many others whom the Cross supports: unfortunate creatures and Saints, rich and poor, young and old, the living and the dead. You find yourself around Christ, incorporated in the universal Church, taken up into solidarity with the angels and the saints: welcomed into the arms of God.

This is not an ascent of the years: it is an ascent towards God. To grow old is to come closer to him: a growth towards his eternity; a liberation of self for his youth.

In this ascent conversation becomes dialogue; talking with men blossoms into talk with God. For he alone remains; and face to face with him, the soul: *solus cum sola...*

May 25,1957

The most obvious comparison which occurs to me when I contemplate what I have done is that my life is like a tree in autumn, when it loses its leaves and is left naked. One by one the illusions drop away: politics, literature, friendship, wealth, prestige...

But that is a superficial evaluation. As soon as the eye penetrates further than appearances, it finds that this detachment from ephemeral values is a liberation. Even seeing one's labors for religion disregarded by religious men is a delicate attention on the part of the Father. He desires absolute love: pure and disinterested love. He desires to be loved for himself. And men too are to be loved for him...

February 26, 1958

...my brother is for me...the image of God and I must treat him as I would treat Jesus...

But if this is so, it is absurd and useless to complain if I am not loved and therefore served by other men. I have the right to serve them, not to be served. Therefore if my dedication meets with ingratitude, incomprehension and abandonment on the part of others, I must not grieve on my account; if at all, on their account. My duty is to give, not to receive.

"In love, what counts is to love"; 'to love' (active), not 'to be loved' (passive).

This activity, this giving, this service is the real stuff of life, and of a life which does not disappoint; and such service wins eternal life.

November 11, 1958

How can one get bored in life if the City of God is there to be built up? How can one suffer from desolation if one can live in communion with God? How can one feel oneself alone, if in solitude above all one can converse with God? The Word demands Silence.

July 5, 1959

Socially, religion is only service. Service is the highest dignity of man: a ladder for mounting to God.

For to serve is to love in *deed*, as Christ loved us, giving us all, without asking for anything. When one begins to claim a return, one descends from the divine to the human.

April 14, 1960

God comes down into me by way of bread: I go up to him by way of my brother.

LC TIE LINE throughout the world

Also in this issue, LC TIE LINE offers to our readers some thoughts that Chiara Lubich shared in a conversation with members of the Focolare Movement during the month of April. They are printed here together with news of the Movement all over the world.

The sentence from the the Gospel, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet" (Jn.13:14), brings to mind an episode which left a deep impression on me several years ago.

A young mother of ten children, learning that she had a fatal illness, entrusted each of them, one by one, to different families. When she felt she was near death, she undertook a long, exhausting trip to visit each child for the last time.

Having completed this last duty of hers, lying on her deathbed she said, "Everything is in order."

This mother truly teaches us what it means to love.

To us, too, God has entrusted people to love, to care for, to help, so that we can go ahead together on the 'holy journey' of our life in the best possible way, paying our debt of love.

The last time we spoke, we understood that we must be the living Word of God.

What can we do then to live as perfectly as possible the sentence we mentioned before? Here Jesus is giving us an unparalleled example: an example revealing the Christian way to love.

When it comes to putting this into practice, I think we could be helped by a daily examination of conscience to see if we too, considering those who have been entrusted to us, can say every night as that mother had said: "Everything is in order."

At times, "everything" will be some concrete help for someone, at other times, a piece of advice, or a gift, or perhaps simply a smile. It may mean to share someone's burden, misfortune, or joy; to share food or clothing, or money, or a beautiful and helpful idea to go ahead together on the 'holy journey' ...

Christianity is love. God is asking of us this service of love.

But he does not ask this only of individual people.

This sentence from the Gospel tells us clearly that this way of living must be reciprocal. In fact, Jesus said, "... you also ought to wash one another's feet."

During my recent trip to Holland, I was struck — among other things — by the motto which this nation has chosen as its own: "In harmony, little things become great."

This is true, and the people of Holland, having gone through a constant struggle to gain some land by reclaiming it from the sea, must have often experienced the truth of these words: "In harmony, little things become great."

Jesus too wants his followers to live in harmony. In fact, he asks something more of them: he asks that they put mutual love at the very basis of their life. It is this love which gives value to everything we do, and brings about Jesus' presence in our midst.[1] It is Jesus who knows how to work miracles of love even with our own fragile lives, helping us "taste" that happiness which he announced when, having washed the feet of his disciples, he said, "What I just did was to give you an example: As I have done, so you must do. Once you know all these things, blest will you be if you put them into practice" (Jn.13:15,17).

CHIARA LUBICH

Holland

A gathering of 1,600 people took place in Amsterdam when Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, visited Holland in March. Some of those present had known the Movement for years.

A meeting of this size is unusual for the Dutch people who prefer smaller, more informal gatherings. But this was an exceptional event, drawing many members and friends of the Movement from the Hague, Rotterdam, Nimega, as well as large groups from the Scandinavian countries, and 200 members of the Reformed Church from the Benelux.

Many parents of Dutch focolarini [2] came as well, drawn by the desire to understand what had prompted their children to give their lives to God.

To this crowd, fully aware of the still unresolved difficulties of the Church in Holland, Chiara spoke of Jesus, the Risen Lord, present in the midst of those united in his name.

At the conclusion of her talk, Chiara spoke of the typical organization of the Movement. It is love which links each person to the other as if in a "cluster," thus enabling all to undertake together a unique kind of journey — a journey toward sanctity.

Bishop Bruno Wustemberg, the Pronuncio of Holland, attended the meeting, and Cardinal Willebrands, who had already met with Chiara in Utrecht, sent a message thanking the Movement for all it has done for Holland's young people, families, priests and religious.

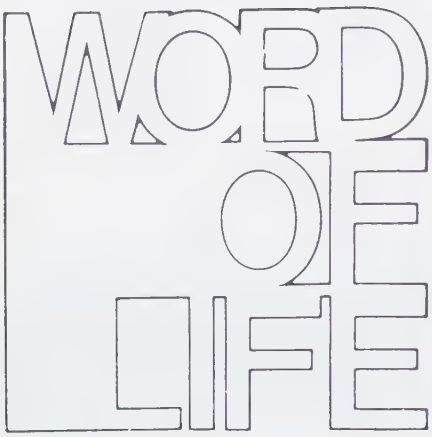
Ecumenism

Dr. Philip Potter, present secretary general of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in Geneva, has invited Chiara Lubich to speak to the directors of the commissions which represent member Churches throughout the world.

At that time, Chiara will also meet with Metropolitan Damaskinos, director of the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambesy, Switzerland.

1) Cf. Mt. 18:20.
2) See inside back cover.

"The International Congress for Priests and Religious" associated with the Focolare Movement took place in Rome, April 30 in the Pope Paul VI Hall in the Vatican. Pope John Paul II was joined by the more than 7,000 priests present for a concelebrated Mass. The participants were coming from sixty countries. The next issue of **Living City** *will present in-depth coverage of this event.*



"My grace
is sufficient for you,
for my power
is made perfect in weakness."

(2 Cor.12:9)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor.12:9).

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul, having to defend himself against various accusations, lists his qualifications to underscore his mission as an apostle. After referring to the labors and sufferings he has endured in spreading the Gospel, he speaks of the visions he has received which revealed to him God's mysteries.

He adds, however, that to prevent his becoming proud on account of these extraordinary revelations, he has also been given "a thorn in the flesh." These words indicate some sort of physical torment, perhaps a result of malaria.

Three times he has begged Jesus to remove this suffering, but Jesus has replied:

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

The action and power of God are best manifested through those human instruments that are weak and infirm.

It is obvious that the more the instrument used is "nothing," the more it demonstrates the greatness of the one using it, the actual author of the work.

Paul realizes that this is true and reacts by declaring: "And so I willingly boast of my weaknesses" (2 Cor.12:10). Among these, he mentions infirmity, abuse, hardships, persecutions, and anguish suffered for love of Christ.

Although Paul is thinking primarily of the difficulties inherent in the life of an apostle, there are other "weaknesses" which all of us Christians can experience: misfortune, repeated failures, our lack of love, our many limitations, and all that is an expression of our "old self"[1] and which, by making us aware of our own incapacity, motivates us to place our trust in God alone. For people who are convinced of their own nothingness are empty of self; thus God is able to fill them with his Life.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

How then should we look upon weakness, suffering, and failure?

Certainly they should not be viewed as a punishment or a curse, or as an obstacle to our encountering God. Instead they should be accepted — I would even say loved — as the setting in which God's power can best be shown.

Evil (think of sin) is evil; and evil must be hated. But the pain we feel for having offended God, the sense of failure, the burden of our sinful humanity, should remind us of Jesus crucified, of his countenance disfigured for our sins. And the thought of him should move us to love our suffering, to offer it to God. Our life then becomes a participa-

tion in the sufferings of Christ, a dying with him moment by moment, which contributes to our own true good and the good of many others.

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

How can we live this word of life?

Even a little understanding of it makes one thing clear: the course of action we must choose as Christians runs completely counter to what people ordinarily choose. Here we truly have to go against the trend. The world's ideal of life generally consists in achieving success, power and prestige. Paul, in contrast, tells us that we must boast of our weaknesses...

Therefore, let us love each suffering we encounter, every sorrow that comes from the realization that we are not as spiritually or physically strong as we thought ourselves to be.

Let us confidently place ourselves in God's hands. In the setting provided by our weakness and our nothingness, he will act. And when he acts, we can be sure that the works he accomplishes are of real value; that they will be a source of lasting good, and that they meet the real needs of both the individual and the community.

CHIARA LUBICH

1) Eph.4:22.

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

A LOVE THAT STRENGTHENS

I had come for dinner that evening and just as I finished eating, the phone rang. My sister was calling to tell me that my father was in the hospital. He had fallen from the tree in the backyard while pruning it. She had very few details about his condition as he was still receiving emergency treatment at a nearby hospital. I told her I would go right away to be with Mom. She would come later.

When I arrived, Mom and my brothers were in the waiting room. My heart went out to Mom in her distress as she told me the story of what had happened. Dad was then in X-ray. The doctor informed me that his vital signs were stable; however, with the injury he had taken to his head, his signs could change quickly. We waited and prayed while my brothers went to grab a quick dinner. In the meantime, the doctor came through again to inform Mom and me that my father's condition had changed drastically. He recommended we call a priest.

In the minutes to come we did all we could for Dad — calling the priest, a family doctor and relatives and friends for prayers. Within my heart, I was earnestly pleading with God to keep my father alive. At that moment, I remember crying within: "No, no! Not now!" Then I remembered the word of life: "I am the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word." I knew I had to say my yes to God whatever his will would be. I said my yes and in doing so I had the strength to turn to my mother and encourage her to do the same. I reminded her of Mary's great yes to God and encouraged her to be like Mary whom she loves.

The love that strengthened all of us in the hours before Dad died was truly the work of the Spirit. I know my strength was to love Jesus Crucified in my father who was suffering, and Mary Desolate in my mother, in her loss. In their brokenness, the power of God was strong.

As more family and friends arrived, we gathered with our parish priest in the waiting room to pray that God would bring my father into the peace and joy of His heavenly home. The presence of Jesus in our midst was felt by all. Surrounded by such love, my father went home to our Father. He died a beautiful death.

J.W.

THE SOLUTION

Recently my twelve-year-old daughter, Grace, had the task of calling some girls to invite them to a school get-together. Some were her close friends, but some she didn't know very well. I noticed that as she made the calls, she was becoming more and more upset. I wondered how I could share her problem, and then I remembered the word of life, "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost." I understood that I had to make myself one with her in this difficulty.

Since she too tries to live the Gospel, I asked her whether we

could, with Jesus in our midst, see what the problem was, and what could be done about it. She agreed. There was a moment of silence, and then out came her problem. She felt that we didn't understand how difficult it was for her to call people whom she didn't know well.

I tried to listen to her to the end, putting aside my thoughts and ideas in order to make myself one. After she had finished telling me everything. I realized that the problem didn't seem so big to me. I thought, "She is going through adolescence; these feelings seem pretty normal for her age." But again the word of life came to my mind, "For the weak I made myself weak..." In this moment, she was the weak one, and I wanted to love her by making myself one. I thought, "In this moment, I have to be a twelve-year-old." I started to share my experiences of when I was her age, and how even now, I sometimes still experienced these very same difficulties burdening her. Little by little, the joy came back to her face, and she understood that she could try to love each person with whom she had to speak.

After a little while, my nine-year-old also had a problem. Grace, with a big smile said, "Talk it over with Mommy; then the problem won't seem so bad." I felt a deep gratitude to Jesus for having given me the light to make myself one.

W.L.

AN UNEXPECTED OUTCOME

My younger brothers and sisters thought my wife and I to be a little odd . We did not drink, nor did we enjoy the same topics of conversation, nor tell the same kind of jokes; it was hard for them to accept us and, little by little, we gradually were left out of family gatherings.

We, in turn, thought, "But we have better things to do," and slowly, we too withdrew from their activities, and no longer spent any time with them.

But when I read the word of life, "For the weak, I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost," I immediately knew what I had to do: I called home to see if we could come by and visit. My mother was very happy; she said that we were to come right over, and that most of my brothers and sisters would be home too. We went. At first, it was pretty awkward but I remembered the word of life, and tried to think up topics of conversation that would interest all. We made it through the first visit.

During the week, I called home to say that I had had a nice visit, and that maybe we could see each other again the following Sunday. This time the visit was less awkward; we played a card game that they liked and I didn't know. The whole visit was spent trying to teach me the game.

Near the weekend, I called again, and said that I enjoyed Pinochle, maybe we could play it again soon. They surprised me: they wanted to come over and visit at our house. This was totally unexpected because it had been a long time since they had been over.

My wife prepared their favorite dinner, and our visit turned out to be truly enjoyable.

Our relationship steadily improves. We can tell that they feel freer to accept us, and I have understood that I can love by making myself one.

F.S.

THE COURAGE TO LOVE

When my parents were divorced five years ago I decided to go live with my father. My mother was very hurt, and from then on our relationship changed. It seemed as though she could only remember my faults and would remind me of them every time we met.

On my brother's birthday, my mother decided that we should take him to dinner, also because he would soon be going away to school. I really didn't want to go because I couldn't get her criticisms out of my mind. I was about to say no when the word of life came to my mind, "Courage! It is I"; so instead I told my mother I wanted to go. When I hung up the phone I realized that from this point on I would have to see my mother 'with new eyes.'

During dinner we talked about what was going on in our lives and I listened as though Jesus were telling me; as I listened with full attention, it seemed as though my mother was beginning to do the same for me. That night was beautiful! We didn't talk about the usual subjects.

After dinner I drove to my mother's to pick up the car I had come in. As I was leaving, my mother picked a rose from her garden and waved to me to come back. She asked, "Do you have a vase for this rose?" I answered yes with a smile. Driving home I again remembered the word of life, "Courage! It is I!" I thought if I always had the courage to love Jesus in others, my relationships would change.

L.A.

THE PLUNGE INTO LOVING

The new word of life for the month was, "For the weak I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost." I was still wondering how I could put this into practice when I went to pick up my children from school. One son came out right on time. The other son who is usually late was late again. It's always hard when he is slow coming out of school because the

baby usually starts to fuss and tries to squirm out of his carseat. And this can be quite a source of irritation for me.

After the first son had come, he showed me a cupcake he had gotten from one of his friends; he wanted to know if he could give some of it to the baby, and I told him he could. So while we waited he gave tiny pieces of it to him and the baby stayed happy and occupied.

After a long while of waiting, I went into the school to see why Jeff was so late. I found out that he was finishing a test. So, I went back to the car and waited some more. After another long wait, I went back into the school to see if he was anywhere near finishing. As I reached his classroom I saw his teacher who told me that he was in tears because he hadn't studied for a test. Usually my initial reaction would be to be really 'put out' that we had had to wait so long and especially that he had forgotten to study.

In that moment, however I remembered the word of life. When I looked at my son, sitting there all alone and in tears, I saw that he was the 'weak' to be loved. Instead of telling him to hurry and come, I hugged him and tried to feel as he was feeling. I didn't say much but just helped him to get his things together. Jeff said, "Mommy, I love you," and I sensed that he really felt loved in that moment even though he knew that I am usually in a hurry to get home with the baby.

When we got into the car, the other son asked me if the baby could have some more cupcake. I told him that maybe Jeffrey would like some. With that he immediately gave it all to him, even though he hadn't had any himself. I could see that he too was trying to make himself one with Jeff. That evening the boys were more helpful than usual. They had really plunged themselves into loving, too. When my husband came home from work he found us living with such a peace and harmony that he immediately noticed it.

I found out that Jeff had actually studied for the test, but the test had been postponed and he had forgotten to re-study for it, so I was glad that I hadn't gotten angry with him. In making myself 'weak' with him, I remembered what it was like to be a student and that these things can happen. Through this experience we were able to sit down with Jeff and help him find a way to remember all homework, a program that he has enthusiastically put into practice. One act of love produced many fruits for our family.

J.Z.

GOOD RESULTS

I am a teenager and I teach religious instructions to first graders. It gets frustrating because they don't understand things too quickly. But lately I have been remembering the word of life, "For the weak, I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost."

When I tried to love them in this way, I found out that I stayed a lot calmer, and that they didn't fool around as much. I could see that they felt my love, and they began trying to pay attention.

M.P.

FINDING A BALANCE

These last nine months have been an intense time at our house because we are involved in a special brain stimulation program for David, our two-and-one-half year old. It takes a very delicate balance to spend four hours a day with David and yet not neglect our fourteen-month-old, nor our four-and-a-half-year old. The oldest boy especially gets jealous very often, and sometimes I have to stop the exercises with David in order to try and keep this balance in the family.

The other day, I was hurrying to finish the various brain stimulation activities because at 11:00, David had a physical therapy session. My four-year-old, who was not feeling too well, was home from pre-school, and he really wanted me to spend some time with him. I had promised to make a cake with him in the early morning, but I had fallen way behind in my schedule and only forty-five minutes remained to do some exercises with David before we were to leave for the physical therapy session. I wanted so much to complete the exercise program because only in this way can David progress, but inside I felt I had made a promise to make the cake. I was remembering the word of life which said, "For the weak, I made myself weak. I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost." I understood that I had to make myself one with each child, and not neglect Jesus in one for Jesus in the other.

We made the cake. Allan broke the eggs (very slowly), beat the mix himself, and later frosted the whole cake: he was so happy! I still had a few minutes so I went to do one more exercise with David — to roll him back and forth in a blanket for one minute. I usually try to do it alone, and it's difficult. While we began, I looked up and Allan was standing there. Sometimes I had asked his help, but this time, I had not said anything. Without a word, he picked up the blanket, and the exercise went very quickly. David was happy to see his brother helping, and I knew Allan felt loved.

C. S.

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1) Cf. Mt. 18:20

A brother
is a better defense than a strong city,
and a friend
is like the bars of a castle.

Proverb 19

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

Maternal instinct — fact or fiction?

A mother attempts to unravel the complex relationships that can exist between parents and child.

One day last summer, I was glancing idly through a newspaper, when one of the headlines seemed to leap out at me. "Does maternal instinct exist?" it asked.

The text below was illustrated by a miniature portrait of a nineteenth century noblewoman, seated on a couch and holding a new-born baby in her arms.

I immediately felt impelled to read through the article to see what answer it offered to such an intriguing question.

The author, however, did not wish to commit himself. He merely presented a comparison between the ideas of Bertrand Russell, as set out in Rudolph Schapper's book "Motherhood," and those expressed by Elizabeth Badinter in her recent publication "More than Love."

If anything, the writer tended to 'demythologize' the idea of motherly feeling, rather than support the constant discussion about natural instinct which is characteristic of today.

As I became absorbed in the article, my mind became filled with thoughts of my own experience. I remembered how, during my first pregnancy, I had longed for the child to be born.

People had tried to tell me what it would be like when I felt the baby move for the first time, when I saw myself growing bigger and bigger and when I finally held the child in my arms. Well, I must confess that I did experience something quite powerful at these times.

On a different level, however, I came to a new understanding of the words of Jesus,"When a woman is in labor she is sad that her time has come.When she has borne her child, she no longer remembers her pain for joy that a man has been born into the world" (Jn.16:21). I was caught up with a sense of wonder at being faced with the mystery of a new life.

My sentimental feelings, on the other hand, did not seem to be very strong. I even began to suspect that there was something unnatural about me.

I had been told that I would be able to recognize my own offspring immediately among thousands of others. I was never able to put this to the test, though I did see two of my friends smiling and gesticulating for ten minutes at a baby who turned out to be the daughter of a complete stranger. Their own child had occupied that place the day before.

Reading the article, I also came to realize how powerfully the Romanticism of the nineteenth century had affected the outlook of even my own generation. Today, however, all values,true or not, have been questioned. Even the sacred ideal of motherhood is under attack.

It seems to me that, in questioning so many ideas, and in airing so many different theories, we have thoroughly confused the concepts of maternal instinct, motherly feeling and a mother's love. Is it not about time we tried to unravel this knot?

Instinct, I would say, is something we share with the animals. It operates in us automatically, in spite of ourselves. Sentiment, on the other hand, belongs to the essential nature of man, and is bound up with feelings.

Sentiment is essentially passive. It is something we experience without being fully able to control it.(Think of "love at first sight," or the idea of Cupid arrows.) It always involves suffering. Indeed, the word 'passion' comes from the Latin for 'suffer.' It can, and often does, carry us right off the rails of rational behavior.

So it seems that it is better for a mother not to rely too much on instinct or sentiment. My own experience has borne this out. I have met so many mothers who have produced a certain intolerance in themselves and their children through over-em-

phasis on these aspects of their relationships. A mother's love, however, does not exclude instinct or sentiment, but takes hold of them and transforms them into something positive.

The most important point about love is that it involves the will. In order to love, I have to 'want' the good of the other. Moreover, love can be cultivated, increased, purified for loving often means sacrificing your own desires.

To go one step further, this 'willing' is worthy of a person's dignity because it leaves free both the one who gives the love and the one who receives it. Mother and child remain separate persons.

Often, parents seek to use their children's achievements as an excuse for their own self-aggrandizement. Again the happiness of a mother or father can depend too much on whether their child is healthy or attractive. Where there is real love, these warped relationships cannot develop.

At this point, I feel I should turn to an equally important subject, which is receiving more and more attention at the present time. I mean paternal love.

This particular love involves the man in a whole host of issues which exercise our minds today such as women's lib, abortion, birth control and sexual equality, making him more aware of his family responsibilities. Nowadays, it is quite common to hear young husbands say, "We're expecting a baby," rather than "My wife is expecting a baby."

To sum up, this mature love for one's children, having both male and female elements, springs from the commitment of husband and wife to love one another and to offer to their children the gifts particular to their own sex. It is love which communicates equilibrium and serenity to the children.

A background of love

On a brief visit to my home town, I phoned an old school friend whom I knew wanted to see me. We had not met for years and in that time, although she was quite unchanged physically, I noticed that as a person, she was radically different. Her manner was now relaxed, at ease and she had totally lost the shyness and awkwardness which had previously been so characteristic of her. I commented on the change, and with a smile she replied, "Yes, I know — I've come a long way since we were children..."

As a schoolgirl, she had seemed sad, reserved, embittered even, and did not speak much. The reason for her withdrawn personality was due to an unhappy family situation.

The only time I recalled seeing her looking radiant was on her wedding day. She married a loving and likeable young man. Some months later, when she was expecting her first baby, she said to me, "You know, I want my children to have the love I didn't get. I want them to feel loved and be happy.

So, when Michael was born, she devoted her life exclusively to him. We saw each other occasionally, in her house or mine, or in the park where my children played with hers. It always surprised me to see her with her son: she cuddled him, helped him with the simplest of things, defended him in quarrels with his playmates — even with my children. She determinedly saw only the good in him, the positive side of his nature — and he exploited this in front of people.

This meeting with her again after years coincided with a period in which I was reflecting on maternal instinct. I don't know what prompted me to share my thoughts with her, but I did. She responded by sharing in her turn with me, and what she said was a sort of confirmation to me of the conclusions of my reflections. She said the following:

"Do you remember how I was with Michael? I wrapped him in my love. I never let him assert himself or be 'himself.' I suffocated him. How could he ever break away from me if, without realizing it, I wanted him to need only me? I thought I could guarantee him the stability and security I had missed myself. Instead, he became more and more insecure, lazy, and later, even worse things happened....

"The fact is that when Michael was little, I hadn't understood what real love was. Following instincts and feelings leads only to a pack of mistakes, I learned. Now, I've admitted it to you. However, over the years I have taken some steps. I have progressed a little.

"Look at Richard, my other son. He's thirteen-years-old now. Apart from features, he isn't at all like Michael. He's so different they don't even seem like brothers. He has friends, is independent, and has such an easy manner. And at the same time, he has a very close relationship with Ron and me. He shares everything with us — he's free, you see. How lucky he was to be born when we understood so much more about love. However, God knows. He will protect Michael and make up for all my mistakes. I believe this completely.

"Perhaps the most important thing I've learned over the years is to put myself in the background. This is such a new idea to me, it's turned my life upside-down.

"Now, when I look at the boys, I see Richard, detached from us, setting out on his own road, with his own personality, and I am happy. You see, it seems to me that maternal and paternal love matures slowly inside us — it means to look on, to listen, and often to be silent. We must speak, yes, but not dominate; share, but not use blackmail on the children. It's by effort of our will that we learn to love our sons properly."

It was getting late and I had to leave. But we were both happy. My old schoolfriend seemed to have gained the trust, and the desire to continue on her road — and the courage to explain it to others.

On another occasion I visited a couple with a very different family experience. They have a little house, a little garden, in a little town. Mark, the father, is a doctor. Pamela, the mother, is a housewife with a thousand commitments outside the house as well as within. There is a grandmother living with them, and four children, aged from two to twelve years. Yet, there is something different about this family.

"Our children came to us in a different way," said Mark. "The first (Anthony), is actually now not the eldest, though he was born in 1971, the year after our marriage. Five years passed. Anthony was growing up and we wanted other children. But Pamela has a weak heart and could not face a second pregnancy. So, we requested an adoption, and Andrew arrived. He was six-weeks-old when we brought him home. Soon, he'll be six-years-old.

"Lawrence is our third child, and and the eldest, at twelve years of age. He's been with us since he was eight. He was a 'disturbed' child, greatly in need of two parents and the normality of the give and take, jokes and laughter of

brothers. He arrived 'almost by accident,' since we had no intentions of adopting any more children. But then, how many natural children arrive 'almost by accident?' Before bringing him home for good, several times we took Anthony and Andrew to visit him in the Children's Home where he lived at that time. Each time, the boys prepared little gifts, and bought candies and toys for him. The looked forward more and more to seeing him, and at last we all welcomed him into our home.

"Stephanie, the youngest and a girl, came to us through the strangest, most complex set of circumstances. To relate them would seem like a fairy tale . However, she's here now with us, and this is our family."

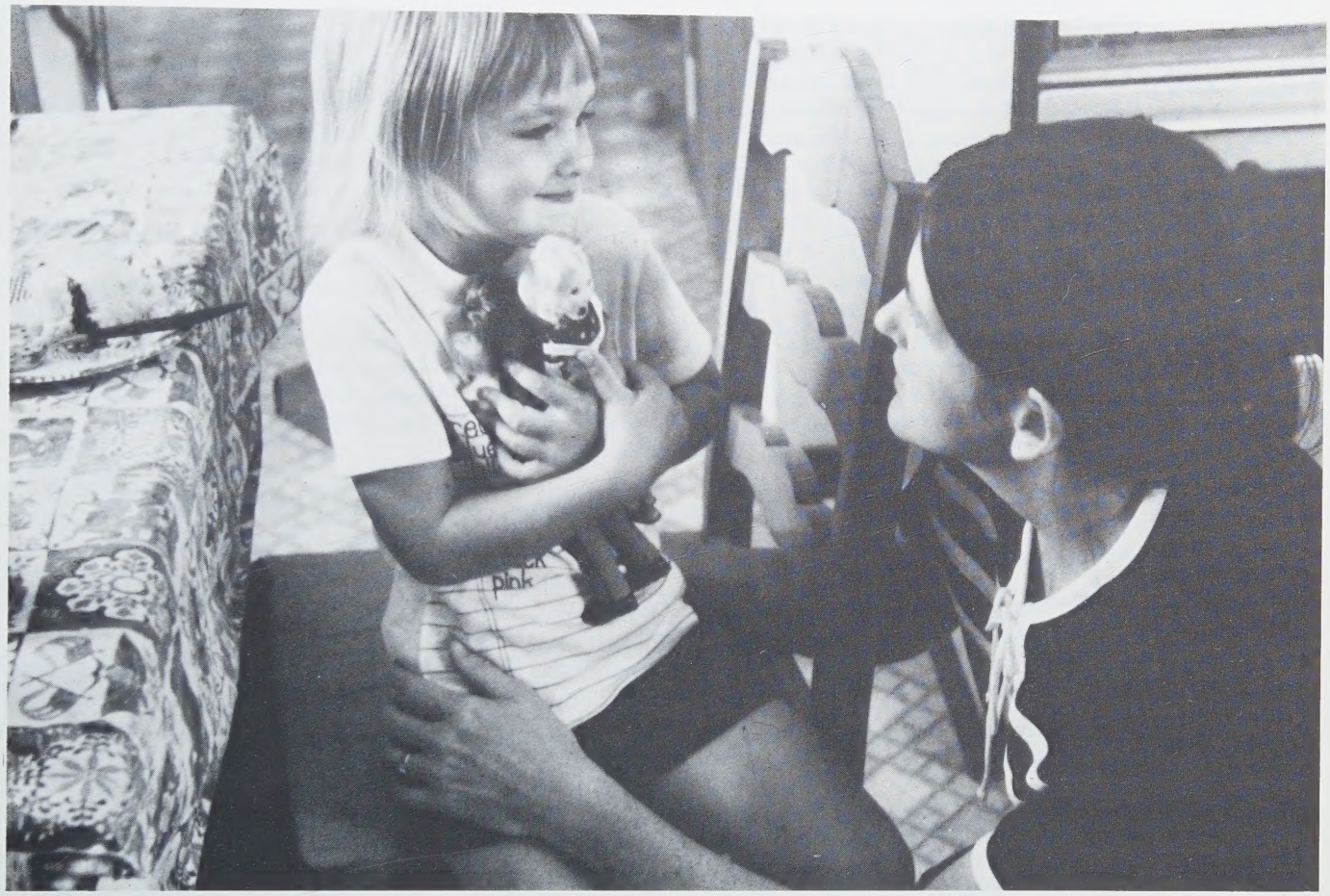
"The differing origins of our children do not affect my feelings for them at all," Pamela said, "I treat them all alike. To me, they are all equal. Having them around me day by day, and having to persuade each one to be obedient, I've forgotten that only one was born to me naturally. They are very different from each other, it's true, in character as well as physically, but isn't the same also often true of blood-related brothers and sisters?

"Mark and I have chosen to have each of these children, and each time the decision has come from the love between us. Each time, together, we've made the decision to love them. And the 'waiting periods' have been so exciting, shared with a son present and a son 'on the way' to us.

"Now, day-to-day living brings with it all the affection, attention, reprimands, punishments, praises and rewards of a natural family. Everything happens simply, not based on any elaborate psychological theories.

"One day, when I was cutting Andrew's nails, I surprised myself

Pamela and Mark Silvestri on an outing with their four children, three of whom are adopted.



with the thought, 'How strange, these little fingers aren't like mine or Mark's and I wonder why?' Then I laughed at myself. I had forgotten.

"The children are aware they have different origins, but this doesn't disturb them at all. They don't feel any differences between them.

"Once, in school, Lawrence was asked to draw his family on a sheet of paper. He drew them in the following way; in the background was a house — our house. On the first floor were six flowers with faces — two big ones, Mark and I, and four little ones of varying sizes. The stem of one of the little ones was attached to one of the big ones. The teacher asked him to explain the drawing.

" 'Three of the four little flowers,' explained the calm and self-confident Lawrence, 'sprouted in another garden, but are being cultivated by the people in the big house.' It was quite logical to him."

"I must admit," said Mark, "that at the beginning I had an instinctive, 'gut' affection for my natural son: for the adopted children, I had a 'chosen' love. In time, I came to see that it was Anthony who lost out; precisely because of the 'gut' love I felt — it was the wrong *kind* of love. In fact, I discovered that the 'chosen' love I gave to my adopted children seemed — and was — more complete. It involved body and soul, all of me, and I realized that I had to love my natural son in this same way. And now, paradoxically, I 'feel' for the others the same instinctive response I had originally only for Anthony. There are no differences today in the love I have for the children. I would do anything for each child without distinction. So, I worry equally for each of them — for their health, their school problems, their spiritual and physical growth.

"Certainly, Lawrence has given us the most worry, and has presented far more serious problems than the other three. He was already eight when he came to us, with a long history and experience of loneliness and suffering. For Pamela and myself it means — if one can say this — that he is our favorite."

Mariele Quartana

The young and the Gospel

We have a large class and many times our teacher gets angry. Yesterday when she was upset, I got upset too, but I decided to offer it to Jesus and to try and keep loving. Then I realized that the teacher was trying her best, but that it was hard for her because we were so many. I listened to her as though she were Jesus, and later she was happier.

Heidi
11 years old

One day my sister and I went to our friend's house. We all had to perform a dance and we went to help her learn it. We practiced it over and over, but she just didn't seem to get the hang of it. I kept on telling her to remember this and remember that, but then I realized that all that mattered was to love her. I tried to, and it worked because at the end she didn't know it too well, but she was getting smoother at it.

Christine
12 years old

Once me and my sister were watching TV, and during the commercials she would read or color in her book. She dropped her book and asked me to pick it up. I felt like saying, "But why should I?" Then I remembered that there was Jesus in my sister, so I gave it to her.

Michelle
10 years old

Last night I didn't want to help my mother with the dishes when she asked me, but I did because I loved Jesus in her. We were happy.

Marianne
8 years old

One afternoon, my brother wanted to play with me, and I didn't feel like playing at all. I just wanted to sit around and be by myself. But then I thought he didn't have anybody to play with, and that I should love Jesus in him too. So I went to see him, and we played Tiddedly Winks. I was glad as soon as I went to love him, and he was too.

Christine
11 years old

One day my mom did a lot of washing and there were some clothes in a basket. I was about to go play with my friend. My mom was real busy and she didn't have time to do them. So I loved Jesus in her and did it.

Michelle
11 years old

Nobody ever played with one of the girls in my neighborhood. I decided to really love her, so we played together. After awhile, some of the other girls started to play with her too and noticed that she was nice, too. Now they play with her almost every day.

Lynann
11 years old

I went to a party and the children were grabbing the balloons and shoving each other. I gave my balloons away because I didn't want to push Jesus out of my heart.

At the end of the party, someone gave me a blue balloon to take home. Even though I wanted a red one, I didn't say anything. When I got home, I was happy.

Mary
6 years old

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

The Focolare Movement began in 1943, in Italy. Chiara Lubich, with a small group of girls, realized in the midst of the total destruction of World War II, that God is the only one worth living for. Hence they began to place the Gospel in the center of their lives. The testament of Jesus became their Ideal: "That all may be one . . . that the world may know that you have sent me, and that you have loved them as you have loved me . . . " (Jn.17: 23). The life lived by these first girls, the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to a form of spirituality proper to the Focolare Movement. It represents a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

The name "Focolarini" takes its origin from the Italian word "fire" and suggests the idea of "carriers of fire."

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. They work as other lay men and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini."

THE VOLUNTEERS

The Volunteers, who are also called the "Volunteers of God," would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. For this reason they remain in their jobs and in their professions in order to vivify them with this spirit.

Their aim is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

THE LARGEST MEMBERSHIP

The largest membership of the Movement is made up of men, women, and young people of all social conditions who are free of any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their free and willing acceptance of its spirit. They keep in touch with the Movement and with one another through large or small gatherings, publications, correspondence, and personal contact.

People with other commitments, even those bound to religious institutions, can form part of the Movement too because the Movement exists wherever its spirit is lived. People of non-Christian religions are also counted among the Movement's friends. Also those who owe no allegiance to any faith are often attracted by one or another of the Movement's aspects.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation.

Thousands of young people all over the world have been attracted by the spirituality of unity. Their number continues to grow.

At the core of this large group of youth, are Gen who have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love. The Gen use all possible means to share with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

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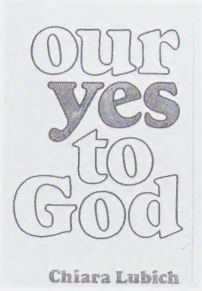

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"A celebration without end" is how Vincent de Paul describes the lives of those who say "yes" to God by doing his will.

In this book Chiara Lubich explores the many facets of doing God's will, which is one of the central points in the life of the Focolare Movement she founded. Her central thesis is God is love, and there can be no better way of loving him in return than by doing what he asks of us.

First she puts this fundamental intuition to the test of Scripture. She then moves on to the experiences of some of the great saints, and draws upon the teachings of the Church Fathers, the Second Vatican Council, and the recent popes.

This book is stimulating and practical. It shows that doing God's will involves much more than mere passivity or resignation. Moreover, throughout the book, Chiara Lubich points out that doing God's will is the way to true freedom and to our total fulfillment as human beings.

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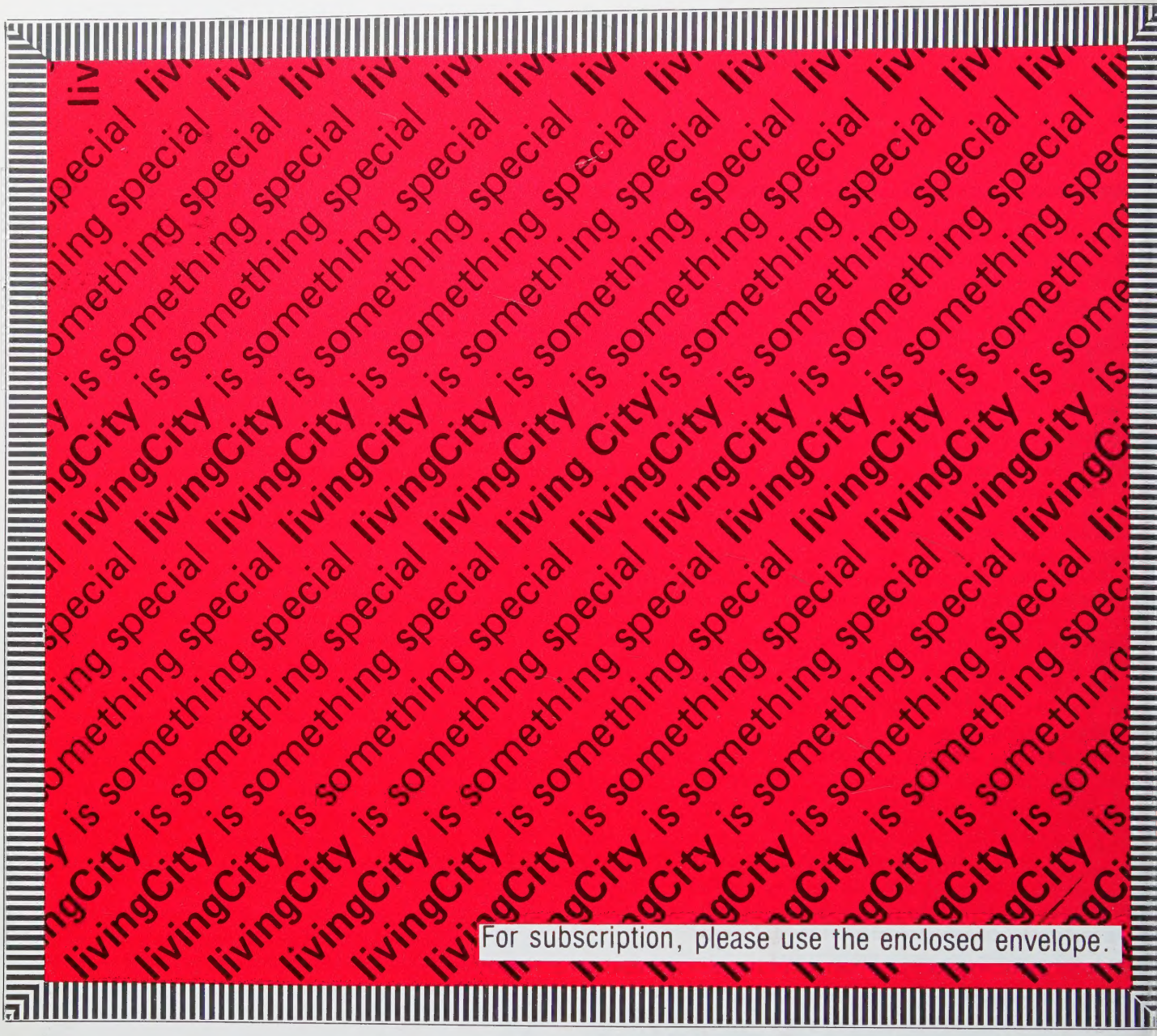

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